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Garden Time Newsletter • March 2023
Volume 2, No.3, Issue #8

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PODCAST 015

Season 2
Episode 3

Feb. 18, 2023

The saying goes, "Always have the right tool for the job." For the gardener the choices are many. On this episode of Garden Time we talk about essential garden tools, some of the coolest tools on the market, and what the beginning gardener should have in their shed. We'll give you the dirt on great garden tools!



People are always asking what types of tools do I REALLY need in the garden. Well, we have come up with the basic CCD. That means Cutting, Cultivating and Digging tools. We visited the tool wall at the local Portland Nursery on Stark to talk with Jimmy. He is the hard goods buyer for both locations and that means he buys all the tools that you see at both stores. He had a nice collection of basic tools for beginners and also some tools for the advanced gardener. We started with the smaller hand tools first. Jimmy talked about having a good quality tool in your garden. This may mean that you will pay a little more, but you will be rewarded

in the long run. Strong, forged handles and blades, instead of folded metal, can guarantee that your tools will be able to handle anything in your garden.

Some Basic Hand Tools for the Beginner or Small Garden

A hand trowel for digging. Once again a good solid, heavy duty trowel for getting big (or small) scoops of soil. This tool will dig, divide and cultivate soil. It's like having a mini-shovel in your hand. Since this is a tool for digging you will want it to feel good in your hand. That

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A 4 inch large trowel from Red Pig tools.

is true for all your tools. They should fit your hand well and not create additional strain or pain. Jimmy used a trowel from Red Pig Tools (<https://www.redpigtools.com>) which was forged so it would handle any job in your garden.

A hori hori knife. This, too, can be used for digging. It is a Japanese weeding tool or some call it a 'soil knife'. It has a relatively sharp side and a serrated side to the blade. The sharp side is good for cutting into tough soil and cutting open bags of soil and twine and rope. The serrated side is good for cutting and dividing roots during transplanting. It is also great for planting bulbs and digging holes for smaller plants.

Pruners were next. You need a good solid pair for cutting. We recommend the Felco pruners, because they are well made, come in different sizes for different hands, and have replaceable parts so you don't need to replace the whole pruner. They also come in various sizes so you can pick the one that fits best in your hand. Jimmy also had a pair of Corona pruners which are good and a little cheaper than the Felcos. If you are a new gardener you will find a couple different types of pruners, bypass and anvil. Bypass pruners are preferred by most gardeners and are the most popular pruners on the market. The main blade 'bypasses' a flat edge and slices through the plant material making a clean cut. An anvil pruner has a blade that hits the flat edge and makes a 'crushing' cut to the plant material. Take a look at both types when choosing your tool so you get the one that you prefer.

For cutting larger branches you may look at pruning saws. Felco also makes a nice tool that can cut through branches up to six inches in diameter or larger. Remember to have good footing, wear safety gear and, for safety reasons, try not to cut above your head. Loppers are just larger pruners and hedge trimmers have a large cutting surface for hedges and ornamental grasses. The longer handles give you the leverage to cut those large branches, but if the branch is too big you can damage the lopper and you should go with the pruning saw.

One of the small tools that is easily overlooked is watering tools. These are your hoses, spray nozzles and shutoff valves to help you water

and control the water that you use. We looked at some of the watering tools from Dramm (<https://rainwand.com>). A good hose will not kink or burst over time and helps you apply water to where you need it most without wasting it. Good sprinklers and spray nozzles are essential for controlled application. Dramm makes a watering wand and nozzle that has multiple settings so you can go from a stream of water to a soft rain by just turning the dial. These are built so that you can drag them around on the ground and they will hold up to the beating. They are so tough, they are the watering tool that most garden centers and nurseries use. One other thing that you would need would be a shutoff valve that you can control at the end of the wand. Then you can turn on and shut off the water when you need it, without going back to the spigot at your house.

A handheld garden fork or three-tine cultivator is also useful. These forks are used to break up soil and rake up small areas of debris. We recommend getting a good SOLID, heavy duty fork. This means the tines will stand up to deep and repeated digging. Once again, look for forged, solid metal and not folded metal handles and tines.

We finished this part of the podcast with Jimmy narrowing down the main tools you should consider if you are new to gardening. He mentioned that a collection including a good trowel, the hori hori knife, an excellent hand pruner and a small hand saw should help you get started.

We then took a break to hear from our great sponsors including Capitol Subaru and Portland Nursery and then returned to talk about long handled and larger tools for your garden.

More Advanced Tools for Larger Gardens

For cultivating you may want a hoe for removing weeds and creating rows for planting. There are a lot of hoes on the market and you can even find a few that have a double head on them. One side will have a hoe blade and the other will have a multiple tine tool for cultivating the soil. Once again look for good construction with strong metal blades and durable

handles so they don't break in the garden. One cultivator that Jimmy had looked like a bunch of cowboy spurs on a handle. These multiple 'spurs' were wheels full of spikes that worked together to rototill the soil, breaking it up and pulling out the weeds at the same time.

Good gloves are essential. As gardeners, we go through a lot of gloves and most of the Garden Time crew have multiple pairs that we use in the garden. Jimmy likes a good nitrile glove that is breathable and Ryan also has a heavy duty pair of leather gloves for larger jobs and dealing with thorny bushes and plants. We also talked about the Garden Like a Girl Weedies (<https://gardenlikeagirl.com>). These are gloves designed for women, but we know of a few men who use them, too. They are durable and have Kevlar incorporated in them to prevent the finger tips from wearing out. Of course you should remember to wear long sleeves and a hat when gardening to prevent cuts, scrapes and sunburn. Also, wear sunscreen on exposed skin and drink water frequently with breaks mixed in.

The next thing that Jimmy had on his list was a knee pad. A nice cushy pad will save your knees and lead to less fatigue in the garden.

And for digging there is nothing like a good spade or shovel. There are many different types, so make sure the one you get has a strong handle, the right blade for the job and is comfortable in your hands. One that has become one of Jimmy's favorites is called the 'Root Slayer'. This is a nasty looking tool! It has a blade like a regular shovel, but the edges of the blade have teeth so it not only digs, it can cut through a lot of thick roots too. It also has a round loop on the handle to give you more leverage when you are digging and prying out the root ball. Most people can do well with a smaller 'floral shovel'. This has a smaller blade and it can do well in those smaller gardens. A larger shovel can dig more soil, but that also means more strain on your arms and back. A smaller shovel will cause less strain for most people. No matter what size of shovel, look for one with a good strong handle and a nice wide foot deck (the place at the top of the shovel where you place your foot) to get the best leverage when digging.



ColorMark Rain Wand from Dramm



Weedies Women's Gardening Gloves from Garden Like a Girl

A rake for breaking up the soil, leveling the soil and cleaning up debris in your beds, and a large garden fork (thicker than a pitchfork) for breaking up the soil and digging are also good to have.

Finally, we talked about having a debris bag or something to put your yard debris in to take it to your recycling or compost bin. Having something to carry will make your work more efficient and give you an excuse to get up and move around so you get an occasional break from work.

The top three long handled tools that Jimmy would recommend for the beginning gardener include a shovel, a rake and a hoe/cultivator. Always look for a good handle size so you are not always hunched over and putting a strain on your body.

All these tools can be found at most of your independent garden centers. If you have questions or are looking for a specialized tool, make sure you stop by either location of Portland Nursery and ask the helpful staff. Remember, the right tool for the job makes that job easier! Once you have all your essential tools, the Portland Nursery website has a great list of brochures to help you with all your garden chores at <https://www.portlandnursery.com/resources/brochures>.

Now that you have these great tools, taking care of them will help them last longer. As Jimmy mentioned, he has some tools that have lasted over 20 years. That is because he does basic maintenance on them every year. Spring is a good time to give them a good cleaning and sharpening. Clean and sharp tools will make your garden chores much easier. Some tips to follow include using alcohol or bleach and steel wool to scrub them clean and disinfect them. Then you want to use a sharpening stone or file to give a good sharp edge to them to make the cutting easier. Remember to only sharpen the beveled edges of the blades! Also, if you have a pruning saw, take it to a professional or buy a new one. They are just too dangerous to attempt on your own. Your local garden center has all the tools you need and they can even demonstrate how to use them correctly. Do a little sharpening now and all your spring and summer garden work will be a breeze!



A collection of pruners.



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PODCAST 016

Season 2
Episode 4

Feb. 28, 2023

Are you ready to spring into action in your garden, but the weather isn't cooperating? On this episode of Garden Time we talk about a few of the late winter chores you can tackle before the spring arrives. We also talk about what you should avoid doing now. All coming up on Garden Time!



Ryan and Judy with guest Jan McNeilan.

The late winter is always frustrating for the gardener. The weather is cold, wet, and sometimes snowy. Yet, the sun will often peek through the clouds and give us a little time to get out in the garden to do a few of those late winter chores. But what should we be doing in the winter garden as we prepare for spring? To get some tips we welcomed Jan McNeilan, retired Oregon State University Extension agent, back to the podcast. She brought her 'book of knowledge' with her. Now we know that this is not an actual book, but notes from her and her husband Ray's years of experience in the university extension service. A lot of these tips we covered when we had the TV show, but now we have time to go a little further in depth on some of the topics.

The first thing we talked about was pruning. This is a topic that we discussed in the past because the

winter is one of the best times to cut back your shrubs and trees. We are talking about the late summer shrubs in particular. If you cut back your spring blooming perennials at this point you will be cutting off the new buds and blooms. The spring flowering plants set their new blooms in the mid-to-late summer and the best time to prune them is right after they bloom in the spring and early summer. Now there are a bunch of spring bloomers that you can prune in the late winter and those include most of your fruit trees and shrubs. Apples, pears, peaches, grapes, fruiting plums, figs and apricots can all be pruned at this time to shape and to promote better production. The key with these fruiting plants is knowing which part to prune. For example, if you cut off the fruiting spurs on your cherries and apples, it can reduce your yield. Check out the OSU Extension website for tips and diagrams on what to cut off. Roses and wisteria are a couple

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Pruning Roses

of flowering shrubs that you can prune in the late winter. In fact we talked about how Presidents' Day is a good reminder to do your rose pruning. You can do your major rose cutting right now and take things down pretty far. Blueberries are also a plant that you can take back right now. For the blueberries you will want to remove about 1/3 of the oldest wood every year (it will have a bark, whereas new canes are green and smooth). Blueberries fruit on the newer wood better than the older canes. If you miss your pruning on President's Day for your roses, don't worry, you can cut them back later this winter or even early spring. A delay in pruning will just mean a delay in their blooming. In fact, if you don't prune they will still send up flowers, they will just be on a taller plant.

Now is a good time to plant some of your woody ornamental plants too. Arborvitea, fir and pine trees, roses, rhododendrons, lilacs and roses can be planted if you can work the soil. Some of the taller plants may need to be staked for one season or at least through the spring to avoid tipping over in the stronger gusts. Remember to remove the stakes after the first year to prevent girdling your new plants. The key here is like any other time of year: Prepare your soil well and make sure that your plant is well-watered once you plant it. You will see lots of bare root trees and roses in your garden centers right now. Since they are winter dormant you can plant them directly in the ground right now. In fact, planting them now will give them time to acclimate and get a head start on root development. Plus the selection of varieties are the best right now, too. Late winter is also a great time to dig and divide some of your other perennials like hostas and epimediums.

Our next topic asked the question, "Is it too early to clean up your garden?" There is a difference between cleaning up, and CLEANING UP. Cutting off the dead and diseased branches and flower stalks should be OK, but you may want to hold off on cleaning up your mulch and soil covering. This mulch is still protecting your plants and could be protecting those beneficial bugs that are overwintering in your beds. You don't want to wait too long (a good time would be late March to mid-April) because if you leave some of the leaf mulch covering your new bulbs it may cause them to stretch for sun and get too long and leggy. This brought us around to bulbs in general. This time of year you will start to see some of your early spring bulbs appearing and this gets people concerned because they think that the plant will suffer in the cold and snow. However the bulbs are designed for this. They have very thick early leaves and the flower is still protected deep inside the plant. They will be



Pulling weeds in the garden.

fine.

Another question we hear regards early season weeding and baiting for pests. The feeling is that weeding is fine. In fact, it may cut down the weed seeds that will get spread in the early spring. Staying on top of the weeds will help control them later in the spring and reduce the need for sprays and other controls. Producer Jeff then asked about pre-emergent treatments. These treat the soil to prevent weed seeds from sprouting, but it can also inhibit the growth of your other garden plants and seeds. Always be careful about applying any chemical (organic or synthetic) to your garden and read the directions on the label. Baiting for slugs can also be done now, but be aware that they are not as active in the cold as they are later in the spring. However, getting them early is a good thing. Each slug can lay over 100 eggs and so if you get on them early you can reduce the number you see later in your garden. You should look for slugs, snails or their damage to determine if you need to bait now.

We then got into seed-starting. A lot of gardeners want to start their seeds now to get a jump on the season. For some that means growing them inside. For others it could mean that they are planting directly outside for those cold weather crops like peas, lettuces, carrots, broccoli and kale. For those crops and other warm season crops, Jan will write the temperature for germination on the seed packet itself. In fact, the seed packet for most seeds is a source for an abundance of information about growing, caring and harvesting for those plants. Some people will even try to plant warmer-weather seeds and even plants outside when the temps are not really warm enough for them to thrive. A good example are tomatoes. You can find the plants in your garden center early in the season. But if you plant them outside without protection they will wither or die. Then you must make the trek back to get more of them later in the season. We know that last year it was so cold and wet that many people didn't get their warm weather crops like tomatoes and basil in the ground until June, and they still performed well at harvest time. If you do start seeds you will want to have a warm and sunny spot in your home. Start with a container (some say egg containers may not work, but give it a try) and fill it with a good sterile planting soil. You can get seeds from your local garden center or even use old seeds that you saved or harvested from your garden last year. But how can you tell if they are still good and will germinate? For those really old seeds you can take 10 of them and put them in a wet paper towel. If 3 germinate then you can guess that 30 percent will germinate. The rule of

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Starting Seedlings

thumb for the old seed germination is as follows:

1 Year: Leeks, onions, parsnips and sweet corn

2 Years: Okra and parsley

3 Years: Asparagus, beans, carrots and peas

4 Years: Beet, mustard, peppers, pumpkins and tomatoes

5 Years: Cabbage, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, lettuce, melons, radishes, rutabagas, spinach and squash

Once in the soil, keep them moist, but not soaking wet. You can use a heat mat or grow lights to help them grow, but it isn't always necessary. Wait until they have roots coming out the bottom of your seed tray and they have 2-3 sets of leaves before you even think about putting them out, and then watch for pests and frost. Watch your soil temperature, too. When it hits 50 degrees, it is a good time to get them in the ground. If it is colder than that, they may just sit there until the soil gets warm, anyway.

Lawn and moss were also on Jan's list. It may be too cold for your lawn to grow but you can mow it to clean up debris like Ryan recently did. Planting grass seed to fill in dead patches is still too early to do. Jan told us that the dates between April 15 to October 15 are the best for seed growth. If you have moss, applying a product also may be a waste of time since a lot of them may work well only when the ground temperatures are a little warmer. The details will be on the moss control product.

Right now, cleaning and sharpening your garden tools is also a good thing. Getting them ready will make those late winter and early spring chores go much

more smoothly. Moles and gophers may also start getting more active. Our thought is that if they are not causing too many problems, leave them alone. They do benefit the soil by digging their tunnels. If you need a reminder, moles eat worms and grubs, gophers eat roots, bulbs and vegetation. Ryan suggested cleaning up the old chemicals in your garden shed. These outdated garden products are considered hazardous waste and should be dealt with in a safe manner. In the Portland, Oregon metro area you can go to <https://www.oregonmetro.gov/tools-living/garbage-and-recycling/garbage-recycling-hazardous-waste-disposal-portland> for details on recycling these products. If you are not in that area, check with your local waste collection provider or your local garden center.

We ended by talking about ways to get everyone involved in these early season chores, including children. Having the kids help with vegetable starting will help them to become lifelong gardeners. Plus, it can be a lot of fun, too! One way to help you get excited for the coming spring and summer is to bring in early season flowers and keep them in your house. Hellebores floating in a bowl will bring that wonderful spring color inside. Some people even cut the early budded branches of quince, forsythia and flowering plum and bring inside to watch them bloom in a vase. Outside fragrance will also add to the excitement!

Late winter is the time to plan and plant. You can get a lot of things done and set the table for a successful gardening season ahead. For more information you can check out the Oregon State University Extension website at <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening>.

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**PODCAST
017
PREVIEW**

March 2023

We're preparing for our next podcast, and here are some of the topics we plan to discuss. Since the Garden Time Podcast is a free-form format, we never know what might pop up as we talk, but the information below is a loose guide as to where we'll begin. We would love to have your input on topics for future podcasts. Send us your ideas and questions at gardentime@comcast.net.

Coming up later in March we will pay a visit to the Wooden Shoe Tulip Farm to preview their annual Tulip Fest. This family-friendly event has taken place for over 38 years and they are gearing up for another wonderful, event-packed festival. We will visit with Barb Iverson to talk about how the Iverson family started this event and how they have kept it going, and growing, for all these years. We will also talk about bulb care, how you can plant and take care of them so you have blooms for many years. We will also get a primer on how new bulbs are developed and grow so they can be available for your garden. Finally, we will chat about the cold weather and what it means for you, the home gardener, and for their festival.

Then as we get to the end of March, we will talk about another great family-friendly event, GardenPalooza. This is the plant sale that starts the gardening season for many local gardeners. This year we return to Bauman's Farm and Garden on April 1st (no fooling!). Bauman's came on a couple years ago to help host the event and the reviews were fantastic. This is a plant sale/garden event you shouldn't miss. We will also talk to Espoma to hear about some of the new and wonderful garden products that they will have on display. Plus, we will touch base with Dramm Watering Tools, our presenting sponsor, to see a few of their new products to help make your gardening easier. Dramm has also donated tools that we will have to give away during the event along with Bauman Gift Cards and a special drawing for a garden arbor from Garden Gallery Iron Works!

Keep an eye on the Garden Time website and our Facebook page for updates, garden videos and information.



Wooden Shoe Tulip Festival



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What To Do in the Garden

MARCH



They say March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb. But, for gardeners, March is more like a turtle: Slow and steady wins the race. Keep up with your gardening regimen, prune and fertilize--and stay ahead of the weeds. March is the month of Spring, and the bare branches of winter will soon be sprouting forth with color!

PLANNING

- Have you been making notes in your garden journal? It'll be fun to see what all you were able to accomplish this year when you look back on your notes!



- Do more vegetable garden planning to take advantage of all the space available. For instance, planting pole beans at the base of corn plants is a great combo! As the beans grow they have the corn to grow on for support and the beans add back to the soil nitrogen needed by

the corn.

- We recommend you research some additional companion planting for your vegetable crops. By planting 'companion plants' together and keeping disagreeable plants apart, you can have the best production ever! If you can tweak your planting

plan to allow for these little natural friendships to develop, then your harvests will be more bountiful than ever!

Ed Hume's seed website has some good info on companion planting or you can find lots of companion planting information in a book by Louise Riotte, "Carrots Love Tomatoes".

Here are just three examples;

Beans like celery and cucumbers but do not like onions and fennel.



Corn lives happily with pumpkins, peas, beans and cucumber but does not like tomatoes!

Tomatoes like carrots, onions and parsley but don't plant them near cabbage or cauliflower.

PLANTING

- This is a good 'general' planting and landscaping month, an excellent time to start looking at what's available to add color and drama to your landscaping. More stock will be available this time of year and the plants can get off to a great start as the soil begins to warm up.

- Your last chance to buy bare root fruit trees is this month. You want to get the bare root trees planted before they leaf out, so hurry in to your local garden center to see what's available.

- Plant berry crops: Strawber-



ries, blueberries and all the cane berries like raspberries and blackberries, currants and gooseberries.

TASKS, MAINTENANCE & CLEAN-UP

- Clean up perennials and divide daylilies, hosta, asters, garden mums and other summer and fall blooming perennials. Cut back dormant perennial grasses to 2" above soil.

- Fertilize trees and shrubs, if you haven't yet, with an all purpose slow release fertilizer. This is the 'last chance' month to apply this six-month slow release formula. You want it to be used up by your plants

by the end of July. This way your plants will have the months of August and September to get toughened up for winter.



- Prune roses if you haven't yet. Thin them out, spacing the branches you leave for best sun exposure. Fertilize roses with a granular slow release fertilizer to keep them strong and healthy, making the rose bush better able to resist disease and insects. Watch for aphids as they love the new growth on roses.

- Prune flowering trees and shrubs when they finish flower-

ing. After forsythia's blooms fade is when you should prune it. Cut out up to 1/3rd of the stems or branches all the way down to the ground. This allows for the new stems to grow that will bloom next season. Look up pruning tips for each plant you are thinking of working on. Your research now will payoff later in better looking trees and shrubs.

- Spread compost over the veggie garden and landscape beds to help enrich the soil.

- Early spring is a good time to apply a lawn fertilizer with extra iron for moss control. The seed germination inhibiting iron will be gone in time for your grass seeding in late April.

- Weeds? Remember that if weeds are allowed to go to seed, more and more work will be added to your garden. Keep up with this task by pulling them or covering the weeds with newspaper and compost, letting them rot beneath and then turning them into the soil once rotted.

- Watch for slugs. Use Bonide's slug bait called 'Slug Magic' to kill slugs safely with its active ingredient, iron phosphate.



VEGETABLE GARDEN

- Check soil temperatures often this month to see what can be planted out by seed. Refer back to the soil temperature chart (in our January issue) for planting vegetables by seed out into the garden. The chart also lists the best soil temperatures for planting young starts.



- Vegetable garden: Apply organic compost to the soil. Spade in this amendment or roto-till. (If soil is still too wet, just spade in amendments as spading is better for the soil structure anyway).

- Start plants indoors, using good organic seed starting soil; broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, chives, green onions, leeks, lettuce, tomatoes, peppers and eggplant.

- Plant seeds outdoors, unless otherwise specified; beets, garden peas, fava beans, cabbage starts, cilantro, garlic cloves, green onion starts, onion sets, shallots, mustard greens, spinach, swiss chard and radishes .

Plant most of the perennial varieties of veggies now like asparagus crowns, artichokes horseradish and rhubarb. Plant carrot seeds at the end of the month.

- Plant Walla Walla onion set starts and the dry white, yellow or red onion sets.

- Pick up your seed potatoes this month as soon as they are available, since they should be chitted first before planting. (It's not a mistake, we do mean chit!) 'Chitting' potatoes is a term that means pre-sprouting seed potatoes. Place the seed spuds in a single layer, eyes facing up, in a cool frost free (no lower than 50F) but well-lit space. Good strong



light, even sun, is best for creating the plump, strong stubby sprouts, not any long weak sprouts you see from stored potatoes. When the sprouts are about 3/4"-1" long the tubers can be planted out in the garden. Chitting first helps with an earlier and larger harvest.

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